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NEWS RELEASE

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The Unicorn Reaps the Awards!

Historic benefit-collaboration proves to be overwhelming
artistic, critical and audience success



A dream collaboration realized its greatest dream as the Colorado Springs production of Giancarlo Menotti's *The Unicorn, the Gorgon and the Manticore* was the big winner at the Sun., Sept. 9 annual *Pikes Peak Arts Council Awards for Excellence in the Arts*. The efforts of the **Chamber Orchestra of the Springs, Colorado's Classical Youth Ballet** and the **Colorado Vocal Arts Ensemble** were honored by two *Vision, Courage and Achievement Awards* chosen by the Classical Music Jury - awarded to the production's conductor, Thomas Wilson and the Theatre Jury - awarded to the production's publicist and producer, David Sckolnik.

"It was bitter-sweet moment for me," said Wilson. "I was so happy to see our hard work pay off so handsomely. But it was truly a shame that the rest of our artistic team – Patty Hoffman and Holly Marble from the Ballet Society and Deborah Teske from the Vocal Arts Ensemble – were not on stage to receive these awards. Everyone performed so spectacularly."

Sckolnik shared his sentiments. "As I said at the performances, I have never been a part of such an equal and seamless collaboration. Rehearsals were like performances and remarkable magic happened

for the audience. Thomas and I both went home and immediately contacted our artistic partners and congratulated them. Frankly, we can't wait to collaborate again."

According to Pikes Peak Arts Council President Eve Tilley, the "VCA" awards are the only ones given at the "PPACS" that are complete surprises. "Each jury is allowed to give an award for an extraordinary effort that is not necessary under any traditional nominating category. It takes a collaboration such as this to get that kind of response." These were the only VCA awards given at this year's ceremony.

That "magic" that happened at the June 9 and 10, 2007 performances at the Louisa Performing Arts Center seemed pre-ordained. The project was launched in April, 2006 with the help of two presenting organizations: **The Colorado Springs School** and the **Colorado College Summer Festival of the Arts**. In Feb. 2007, Menotti passed away at the age of 95 and everything took on a greater vibration and urgency. The "Unicorn" was the composer and librettist's only purely biographical creation and the impact was overwhelming as the "man in the castle" lay on his death bed.

"We hit it right this time," said Teske, who besides being the Founder and Artistic Director of the Vocal Arts Ensemble is also in charge of all choral activities at **Colorado College** and will prepare the chorus for the March, 2008 production of *Carmen* for **Opera Theatre of the Rockies**. "This is a work that has been in our repertoire for years. Now we can say that have been able to bring it fully to life."

The Unicorn is often performed purely as a musical presentation with chorus and chamber ensemble. It was the inspired performance by a student and the faculty of the Youth Ballet that gave the production its wings. "It was a perfect fit for us," said Marble, who along with Hoffman is co-artistic director for the Youth Ballet and the **Ballet Society of Colorado Springs**. "We knew we had something special from the moment all three groups took the stage."

Wilson, who is Music Director of the "Chamber Orchestra" and holds the position of Associate Conductor for the **Colorado Springs Philharmonic** was realizing his own dream. "I hold Menotti to be one the past century's greatest composers. To have given such a fine performance of his signature opus is as good as it gets."

Everyone involved feels a mandate to collaborate once again. "It was splendid exposure to something we never would have seen if these groups hadn't taken on this project," said Tilley, whose own organization acted as the fiscal umbrella for the production. "It's that kind off thinking that will help to make this the art town we want it to be."



photos by J. Miller Adam